

Govt to establish 170 urban health

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This has created challenges in aligning national health policy with local service delivery in cities.

Against this backdrop, the Directorate General of Health Services has proposed the project to expand integrated healthcare opportunities for city dwellers.

Jamaat MP's

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Police and army personnel later brought the situation under control and escorted the MP to safety in the vehicle of the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO).

Contacted, Purbadhala BNP Senior Joint Convener Babul Alam Talukdar denied the allegation of BNP's involvement. "After Maghrib prayers, a Jamaat leader called me, and I immediately went to the spot on a motorcycle. I helped bring them out of the mosque and into the UNO's vehicle. I heard that a dispute arose between locals and the MP's associates over a demand for extra fuel for his car."

Talukdar added, "I have spoken to the MP and expressed regret. If any BNP members are involved in this incident, we will take action against them."

Purbadhala Police Station Officer-in-Charge Didarul Islam said, "Some miscreants vandalised the MP's vehicle. The MP has come to the police station to file a complaint. Once the complaint is received, legal action will be taken accordingly."

Unethical practices

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Speaking at a programme in Thakurgaon, Fakhrul said a global crisis triggered by the US-Israel's war on Iran had affected economies worldwide, including Bangladesh.

"As a result, fuel prices have increased significantly, and we are also feeling the impact," he said.

The minister acknowledged long queues of motorcycles and cars at filling stations, saying the crisis is neither natural nor linked to fuel shortages and supply constraints.

"The problem lies partly in a lack of ethics among some people. Vested quarters have engaged in unethical trading practices, harming the nation," he added.

Fakhrul said the situation must not be allowed to continue and that he had already instructed deputy commissioners to strengthen monitoring.

He also urged people to avoid divisions in the name of religion and politics.

"Our efforts should be directed towards the welfare of the people," he added.

BNP moving

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A new phase of politics emerged. Those who were once oppressed and fought on the streets, some of them, after coming to power, have now forgotten the past."

Regarding the referendum issue, Shafiqur said there is no alternative to a referendum as a legal means of implementing the July charter, something the BNP previously acknowledged. During the election campaign, voters were urged to cast two votes – one for the party symbol and another in favour of the referendum.

"Now that very referendum is being called illegal."

Describing the government's position as "contradictory", he questioned how a referendum could be considered legal before the polls but illegal afterwards.

The opposition leader said there would be no need for protests if the referendum verdict was accepted. However, if it is not implemented, protests will continue both in parliament and on the streets, he said and warned, "If the [forces] of streets and parliament converge, no barrier will be able to hold back the tide."

He urged the government to respect the spirit of the Liberation War and accept the referendum result, saying that denial of the people's verdict never ends well.

At the rally, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis announced a three-month programme, including district-level rallies in May, June and July, and a mass procession on August 5 in Dhaka.

In his speech, party chief Mamunul called on leaders and activists to prepare for the programme.

Speaking at the event, Nahid Islam, convener of National Citizen Party and opposition chief whip, said people are struggling with rising prices, fuel shortages, and a measles outbreak. "We have tried to act as a responsible opposition and cooperate with the government. But the government has repeatedly gone back on its word," he alleged.

Liberal Democratic Party Chairman Col (retired) Oli Ahmed and Amar Bangladesh (AB) Party Chairman Mojibur Rahman Monju, among others, spoke at the event.

Stars shine at Meril Prothom Alo awards

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The ceremony officially opened with a welcome speech from Anisul Hoque, managing editor of Prothom Alo, followed by remarks from Malik Mohammed Sayeed, CEO of Square Toiletries Ltd, the event's long-standing partner.

In his speech, Malik Mohammad Saeed, CEO of Square Toiletries Ltd, said, "This event is not just about giving awards, but also an important platform to honour our culture and creative people. We believe this initiative will continue to contribute to the development of the arts and entertainment industry in the future."

One of the biggest highlights of the evening was the presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Award to veteran actor Alamgir. A moving documentary showcased his decades-long contribution to the industry.

A special video montage highlighting Alamgir's contribution to cinema was also screened during the ceremony, drawing appreciation from the audience.

Renowned singer Runa Laila and his wife presented him the award, while Anjan Chowdhury, managing

director of Square Toiletries Ltd, honoured him by dropping a shawl on his neck.

Receiving the award, Alamgir expressed humility, saying, "I don't know whether I truly deserve this. My younger brother once told me that I am still not satisfied with my acting. The depth of acting is something that cannot be fulfilled in a lifetime. We can never reach the end of that pursuit. The way you have showered me with applause and honour, I will remember it forever."

The award included a cheque of Tk 3 lakh, which the veteran actor announced he would donate to the Prothom Alo Trust Fund.

The opening performance featured group performances by Mondera Chakroborty, Prarthana Fardin Dighi, Sunerah Binte Kamal, and Parsa Evana.

The programme also featured a memorable moment as Nagar Baul mesmerised the audience with a performance of "Taray Taray". The honour was presented to him by Matiur Rahman, editor of Prothom Alo, and Anjan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Toiletries.

Stay in line, don't be provoked

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University to portray Chhatra Dal as a force of disorder at a time when politics on campuses remains sensitive.

The central leaders, therefore, directed university units to act with restraint, avoid unnecessary confrontation, and respond politically instead of physically.

They also advised leaders to counter what they described as the "hidden political agenda" of Islami Chhatra Shibir through organisational discipline, public engagement, and a stronger presence in student-related issues.

A major part of the discussion focused on social media activities. Chhatra Dal leaders said a group was active online to run smear campaigns against the organisation and the BNP. They instructed activists not to respond recklessly to such campaigns and instead highlight the organisation's positive work on campuses.

Jahangirnagar University Chhatra Dal Convener Jahir Uddin Mohammad Babar said, "We have been instructed not to fall into any kind of provocation."

He alleged that Shibir was carrying out online propaganda against Chhatra Dal.

"In response, we will highlight our positive activities," he added.

Leaders at the meeting said Chhatra Dal's activists must remain careful in their language, conduct, and public behaviour. They were told that any erratic action by a local unit could be used by political opponents to question the organisation's role in campus politics.

The central leaders also asked university units to stay connected with general students and focus on issues such as accommodation, academic environment, student safety, and democratic rights on campus.

A Chhatra Dal leader who attended

the meeting said the organisation did not want to return to the old style of confrontational student politics.

"Our instruction is clear. We should not create any situation that harms the academic atmosphere. At the same time, we cannot allow any group to create instability in the name of student politics," he said.

The meeting came at a time when political activities on public university campuses have been drawing renewed attention. Student organisations have become more active in recent months, while incidents of confrontation and allegations of intimidation have raised concern among students and university authorities.

Chhatra Dal leaders said their activists had been asked to remain present on campuses but avoid any move that could be interpreted as aggressive.

They said the organisation would continue political and organisational activities, but those activities must be

Tanjim Saiara Totini earned Best Actress for her role in "Bhalo Theko", while FS Nayeem won Best Actor for "Khub Kacheri Keu". "Tomader Golpo" won two awards in this segment.

In the feature film category, "Saba" won Best Feature Film. The Best Director award went to Piplu R Khan for "Jaya aar Sharmin". Best Actress was awarded to Mehazabien Chowdhury for "Saba". The Best Actor award was jointly won by Mahafuz Munna and Shanto Sutradhar for "Uraal". The actors requested their entire team to come forward and receive the award.

For the television category, Keya Payel won Best Actress for "Eta Amaderi Golpo", while Farhan Ahmed Jovan won Best Actor for "Tomader Golpo".

In the music category, Imran Mahmudul was named Best Male Playback Singer for his energetic track "Konna" from the film "Jinn 3." The Best Female Playback Singer award went to Xeler Rahman for her popular song "Lichur Bagane" from "Taandob".

Shammi Islam Nila won the Best Newcomer award for the role in "First Love."t

carried out in a disciplined manner.

The leaders also discussed ways to strengthen coordination among university units so that any incident on campus could be reported quickly to the central leadership.

At the meeting, the central leadership reminded activists that the organisation's image would depend on how they behave in the coming days. They said Chhatra Dal should not give any rival group a chance to exploit minor incidents for political gains.

Several university leaders said they were asked to remain vigilant but not provocative. They were also told to document incidents, communicate with the central committee, and avoid spreading unverified information on social media.

The central leaders said political rivalry should be handled through argument, organisation, and student-oriented programmes, not through disorder.

birthdays on Friday.

The youngest in the group of freed Ukrainians was 24 and the eldest was 60, he added.

The Russian defence ministry also confirmed the swap had taken place, adding that its troops were undergoing medical checks in Belarus, a Moscow-allied country bordering Ukraine.

"The United Arab Emirates and the United States provided humanitarian mediation efforts to facilitate the return of the Russian servicemen from captivity," Russia said.

US-led talks aimed at ending the four-year conflict were already stalled before the war in the Middle East effectively put them on ice.

Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, said he had always found The Daily Star objective and neutral. He said leading newspapers like The Daily Star and Prothom Alo are expected to uphold the truth, even when it is unpopular.

Muhit Rahman, managing director of One Bank, said The Daily Star had maintained objectivity, and everyone should express opinions responsibly.

Sohail RK Hussain, managing director of Bank Asia, praised The Daily Star's transparency, authenticity and balanced coverage.

Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank, said the incident was unfortunate, but such challenges often make institutions stronger.

Mohammad Ali, managing director of Pubali Bank, said attempts to undermine a newspaper were unacceptable in a civilised society.

Mati Ul Hasan, managing director of Mercantile Bank, said The Daily Star should continue its tradition of integrity and truth-telling.

Selim RF Hussain, former managing director of BRAC Bank, praised the newspaper's business pages and commentary, and said he was proud to be a subscriber.

India denounces

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"President Trump, who was born into wealth and privilege, has never had to struggle the way so many immigrant families have," he said.

The US embassy in New Delhi said: "The president has said 'India is a great country with a very good friend of mine at the top.'"

China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Russia, Ukraine swap 193 POWs

AGENCIES

Russia and Ukraine yesterday swapped 193 captured soldiers each, the second exchange this month in one of the few areas of cooperation between Moscow and Kyiv.

The two countries have exchanged thousands of POWs throughout the four-year war -- with the swaps often the only result of otherwise stalled talks on ending the conflict.

"193 Ukrainian warriors are returning home as part of a prisoner exchange," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on social media.

"We remember each and every one and continue working every day to bring our people home from Russian

captivity."

AFP journalists at the scene of the swap in northern Ukraine saw dozens of exchanged Ukrainians pour off buses looking pale but relieved after long stints in Russian detention.

They wrapped themselves in blue and yellow flags, embraced each other, or cried on the phone to loved ones.

One of the servicemen, who identified himself to AFP only as Vadym, said that after three-and-a-half years in Russian detention he had one immediate wish.

"I want to see my son, who was born while I was in captivity," he said.

Another released serviceman,

Ruslan Osalyak, said he hoped his parents were still alive after more than three years he was in captivity.

"What do I wish for? A peaceful sky over us, and to drive all of them out of here as soon as possible. Every man must defend his homeland, and his family," he told AFP.

A representative of Kyiv's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War told AFP that most of the released military personnel had been held in the southern Russian republic of Chechnya, and that many months of negotiations were needed to secure their release.

The official, Petro Yatsenko, said that two of the exchanged Ukrainian prisoners were celebrating their

concern, she said. Referring to the attack, she said such attacks could be incited by misinformation and disinformation.

She also said the media had lost public trust, adding that this was not about The Daily Star alone. Citing a Media Reform Commission survey, she said there was a general lack of trust in the media. Trust has to be built long-term, with quality control, standards and public discussion, she said.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Md Aminul Haque said The Daily Star had built a strong position through many ups and downs. "Because of its firm stance, The Daily Star has established itself as a trusted institution, striving to present accurate information to the nation impartially," he said.

On the attacks, he said a group had tried to serve its own interests. He hoped The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and other media would continue speaking the truth freely.

Dhaka South City Corporation Administrator Md Abdus Salam said the exhibition reminded him of the character of fascism. After seeing the photographs, he said those who carried out the attack could not be a democratic force and did not believe in democracy or press freedom. He said The Daily Star had stood up again despite everything, and many should learn from it.

AK Azad, CEO and managing director of Ha-Meem Group, said the attack was not just on a newspaper, but on honest and courageous journalism, as well as democracy of ethical journalism, fact-checking and detailed reporting. She said its balanced approach with different opinions is important. Independent media are important because dialogue can address issues of public

Association, said he expected more objective journalism from The Daily Star. He said a newspaper should serve its readers, not its owners.

Anwar-ul-Alam Chowdhury Parvez, president of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, echoed Mahmud's view, saying journalism should be more objective and act as the voice of the people.

Tabitha Awal, president of Bangladesh Football Federation and member of BNP's executive committee, said The Daily Star had upheld journalism on a moral footing for 35 years. In distinguishing fake news from real news, it had become a trusted source, he said. The assault on its office, like earlier attacks on reporters, was deeply worrying, he added.

Jagannath University Vice-Chancellor Prof Rais Uddin said The Daily Star had established itself as a credible and responsible media outlet through objective journalism. He termed the arson attack deeply unfortunate and condemnable, and urged the authorities to identify those responsible and bring them to justice.

MA Jabbar, managing director of DBL Group, said the aftermath of the fire showed devastation far beyond what was shown on television and in media reports. He praised the resilience, courage and determination of The Daily Star journalists, saying they recovered in a remarkably short time.

Rupali Chowdhury, president of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, called the attack a brutal assault on the core principles of journalism. She said such violence was an attempt to intimidate and silence the media, and posed a direct threat to democratic values.

Bangladesh remains at high risks from measles

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Three more confirmed measles deaths were reported in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, taking the total to 42 since March 15. Four more suspected deaths were recorded during the period, raising the toll to 198, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

A total of 172 confirmed cases were reported in the same period, bringing the number to 4,231. Another 1,215 suspected cases pushed the toll to 29,549.

In its Disease Outbreak News on Thursday, WHO said Bangladesh's National International Health Regulations (IHR) Focal Point notified it on April 4 of a nationwide surge in measles cases, affecting 58 of 64 districts across all eight divisions.

The highest cumulative burden of suspected cases since March 15, 2026, has been reported in Dhaka (8,263 cases), Rajshahi (3,747), Chattogram (2,514), and Khulna (1,568).

In Dhaka, cases are concentrated in densely populated informal settlements, including Demra, Jatrabari, Kamrangirchar, Korail, Mirpur, and Tejgaon industrial and slum clusters.

Children under five account for 79 percent of reported cases, including those under two (66 percent) and infants under nine months (33 percent).

A total of 166 suspected deaths has been reported, mainly among unvaccinated children under two, it said.

WHY THE OUTBREAK?

According to the WHO risk assessment, the current outbreak is occurring in the context of suboptimal population immunity.

WHO said that, before the outbreak, Bangladesh had made substantial progress towards measles elimination, with first dose coverage rising significantly between 2000 and 2016 and second dose coverage improving after its nationwide introduction in 2012 through 2024.

Confirmed cases declined sharply during this period.

However, recent declines in MRI and MR2 coverage due to a nationwide stockout of measles-rubella vaccines between 2024 and 2025, combined with routine immunisation gaps and the absence of nationwide supplementary campaigns since 2020, have increased the number of susceptible children and contributed to the outbreak.

In addition, some children were infected before reaching the age of eligibility for vaccination at 9 months.

RISK ASSESSMENT

WHO said the concentration of cases among unvaccinated and under-vaccinated children, including infants, raises concern over continued transmission and severe outcomes.

It also warned of considerable risk of cross-border spread due to population movement.

Major urban centres such as Dhaka, Chattogram, Sylhet and Cox's Bazar serve as key international travel and transit hubs, increasing the likelihood of both national and cross-border spread, particularly among unvaccinated or inadequately vaccinated travellers.

Measles remains endemic across the South-East Asia region, and the regional risk is assessed as high.

In Myanmar, a large number of children remain unvaccinated or zero-dose, while ongoing conflict and humanitarian crises have weakened surveillance and response capacity.

India, despite high vaccination coverage, has reported a rise in cases over the past six months. Border areas such as Jashore and Chapainawabganj -- identified as hotspots -- have busy land crossings with India, increasing the risk of cross-border transmission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WHO recommended strengthening epidemiological surveillance in high-traffic border areas to enable rapid detection and response to suspected cases.

It stressed the need for continued coordination across national, divisional and local levels once rapid response teams are activated, supported by clear and continuous communication channels.

During outbreaks, hospitals should implement measures to prevent nosocomial transmission, including isolating patients and minimising contact in waiting and hospital areas.

WHO also recommended maintaining stocks of measles, mumps and rubella vaccines, along with syringes and related supplies, to respond to imported cases.

However, it does not recommend any restrictions on travel or trade based on the current outbreak.